

COUNCIL MEMBERS WOULD PUT TOTO'S TETHER ON A TIMER

Leggett leash limits barking up the wrong tree, they believe

By [Kathleen Miller](#) | [Email the author](#) | December 2, 2010

Tied-up dogs may soon feel some relief in Montgomery County, but not as much as sought by County Executive Ike Leggett.

Leggett (D) hoped to prohibit owners from leaving their dogs tethered in their yards, unless the owner was outside with the animal and able to keep an eye on it.

The county council's three-person public safety panel Thursday endorsed tightening the current regulations for tying up Toto, but it didn't go as far as Leggett hoped.

The committee wants the county to limit dog owners to two hours of outside tethering a day that must occur between the hours of 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. Current county law prohibits tethering animals outside between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m.

"That is an extraordinarily long time to have a dog tethered, it can raise all sorts of problems," Councilman Phil Andrews said of the 16-hour block of time between 6 a.m. and 10 p.m.

"There has been a lot of information provided that says that it is not only cruel to dogs but also detrimental to public safety because of the potential affect on a dog's behavior," he said.

Andrews, and fellow Council Members Marc Elrich and Roger Berliner who make up the public safety panel also want to require owners to use a swivel leash intended to avoid entanglement.

Maryland's Frederick and Carroll counties already require dog tethers have swivels at both end.

Several county residents showed up at the meeting to support tightening the rules on tethering.

"It's very frustrating, we still see dogs in this county that are left chained up all day," Bethesda resident Nancy Dommel said. "I think people do that because they just don't want to be bothered. There are too many people that have dogs that shouldn't."

Wheaton resident Susan Rich agreed.

"A dog is supposed to be a companion, part of your family," Rich said. "When they're chained up they are very vulnerable to attack by other animals, and it can also make them more aggressive toward the community. It's hard on dogs physically, emotionally and psychologically."

A county council staff analysis of the issue noted that animal advocacy groups report 25 other cities, counties or towns including Miami, Fla. have banned or severely restricted dog tethering.

"It's really surprising to me that Montgomery County has been so far behind on this issue," Rich said. "We're usually considered pretty progressive on a lot of other matters."

Capt. Michael Wahl, director of Montgomery County police's animal services division, told council members he estimated roughly 5 percent of animal owners tether their dogs. Wahl acknowledged enforcement of tethering regulations could be difficult, but if the law passes concerned citizens would be able to file affidavits with the county if they suspected a violation.

Council members do not have the authority to re-write the animal cruelty regulations, but any changes suggested by Leggett's office are subject to council approval.

Leggett's spokesman Patrick Lacefield did not immediately respond to requests for comment on the committee's actions.